

Durham Research Online

Deposited in DRO:

15 December 2009

Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Crang, M. (2009) 'Spaces in theory, spaces in history and spatial historiographies.', in Political space in pre-industrial Europe. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, pp. 249-265.

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://www.ashgate.com/isbn/9780754660729>

Publisher's copyright statement:

Details of the definitive version are available at <https://www.ashgate.com/isbn/9780754660729>

Additional information:

Recently social and cultural studies have experienced a 'spatial turn'. Space-related research seems ever expanding: some historians relate macroeconomics and human agency to regional contexts; others focus on micro-spaces like houses, taverns and parish churches; even virtual or imaginary spaces (such as Purgatory) attract increasing attention. In all of these works, space emerges as a social construct rather than a mere physical unit. This collection examines the potential and limitations of spatial approaches for the political history of preindustrial Europe. Adopting a broad definition of 'political', the volume concentrates on two key questions: Where did political exchange take place? And how did spatial dimensions affect political life in different periods and contexts? Taken together, the essays demonstrate that premodern Europeans made use of a much wider range of political sites than is usually assumed - not just princely courts, town halls and representative assemblies, but common fields as well as back rooms of provincial inns - and that spatial dimensions provided key variables in political life, both in terms of the embedding of practical governance and in the more abstract sense of patronage networks, conceptualizations of power and territorial ambitions. As such, this book offers a timely and critical engagement with the 'spatial turn' from a political perspective. Focusing on the distinct constitutional environments of England and the Holy Roman Empire - one associated with early centralization and strong parliamentary powers, the other with political fragmentation and absolutist tendencies, it bridges the usual gaps between late medievalists and early modernists and those between historians and scholars from other disciplines. Preface, commentary and a sketch of research perspectives discuss the wider implications of the papers' findings and reflect upon the potential and limits of spatial approaches for political history as a whole.

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in DRO
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full DRO policy](#) for further details.

Durham University Library, Stockton Road, Durham DH1 3LY, United Kingdom
Tel : +44 (0)191 334 3042 | Fax : +44 (0)191 334 2971
<https://dro.dur.ac.uk>

Spaces in Theory, Spaces in History and Spatial Historiographies

Mike Crang, Geography Department, Durham University, Durham, DH1 3LE

For Beat Kumin

Political Spaces

Ashgate

2008

In this essay I want to sketch out a set of spaces, spatial relations and spatial scales as ways of framing some of the issues about premodern political space. This I do in large part to resist the temptation so often evident in the geographic literature to end up privileging one space, scale or relation as the arena of the political. Be that classic political geography and its fixation on the territorial scale of the state or urban historical geography with a focus upon, and indeed conflation of, the public sphere of politics and the public space of the city. Through this essay my aim is to move from the simple, though crucial recognition that everything, bar angels dancing, occupies space – that is political events are in space and happen over space -- to a view that asks how space shapes those events and finally one that looks to see a history of political space where the space itself is produced and shaped through evolving and competing political activities.

So this is a three layered account, that first, embeds political histories in the spaces and places of the past – suggesting different spaces and places mattered more or less to different forms of politics in different ways. Second, it reflects on some of the different ways of conceptualising spatial registers of events. That is it will move us beyond the listing of places or the analysis of variations in space and time to ask what manner of space we are investigating. And third, it asks us to clarify what spatial registers do to our accounts when we examine past events. Like Arnade *et al.* (2002) we might ask what the apparently synchronic notion of ‘space’ does to ‘time’ that is, to assumptions that causality resides in chronology and that narrative is the primary medium of history? Historians have been wary of using spatial terms since, as Foucault noted, ‘the use of spatial terms seems to have the air of anti-history. If one started to talk in terms of space that meant that one was hostile to time’ (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002). Spatial registers may disrupt history’s investment in time and linearity, and may appeal as offering ‘a respite from the meta-narratives that have long threatened to reduce [places] to footnotes, outcomes of functionalist processes generated outside the historians’ view, in the shadowy world where such abstractions as “the market,” “political self-

determination,” or “the state” reside’ (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002). This vision of space as material grounding – bringing abstract processes to earth – sees places as where multiple processes come together in complex real world constellations. But there are other spatialities to be found. Differing societies have, as Lefebvre would say, not just differing social relations and contradictions *in* space but *of* space (Lefebvre 1991). The nature of space itself differs. To put it another way societies do not occur in a pregiven space where the only question is how much of it they occupy but rather they create space of different kinds. A plurality of notions of space help, as Arnade et al (2002) put it, historians answer old questions and pose new ones by making space a central theoretical concern. To see if space, previously accorded a bricks and-mortar inertness, is viewed as alive with generative capacity changes understandings of causality. If space does not just contain objects but is created through them, then equally objects are not simply located in space, it is space that defines the objects (Crang 2005). Thus after Heidegger, we might better talk of *spacing* as an action. For him a Greek temple is not added to a given place but rather ‘the building precedes its site’ (Wigley 1993). The temple creates the sense of sacred space and thus the ground for its people (Elden 2001). The chapter will unpack three spatial registers (of spatial representations, of spatial scale and relational space, and the lived space of sociality), taking examples related to other chapters in the collection to suggest how different spaces shape activities and our accounts of them.

Representing Place and the Cartographic Imaginary

Conventionally, there was the assumption that geography dealt with variation over space while history dealt with change through time. Such crass separations have never really held and the subdiscipline of historical geography thoroughly muddled that water. But for many social science and humanities approaches space often had a fairly passive role -- a stage on which temporal processes occur or something that offers local colour minor variations on the main theme. It is a context that explains deviation from otherwise invariant social processes. The antithesis of treating

space as context for social process might be the Annales school and its *geohistoire* of regional charactres, producing idiographic accounts of regional identity and the shaping of landscapes over the *longue durée* of human inhabitation. People and their places are bound together in distinctive regions, each of which is ‘an area carved out by axe and plough, which belongs to the people who have carved it out’ (Olwig 1993). This sensitivity to individual places offers a mosaic of differentiated cultural landscapes distributed over the map forming ‘a variegated landscape of differentially adapted human groups to their immediate environment’ (Archer 1993). In this sense people and landscape are mutually imprinted; in the words of Paul Vidal de la Blache:

It is man [sic] who reveals a country's individuality by moulding it to his own use. He established a connection between unrelated features, substituting for the random effects of local circumstances a systematic cooperation of forces. Only then does a country acquire a specific character, differentiating it from others, till at length it becomes, as it were, a medal struck in the likeness of a people. (1941)

This imagining of human difference encodes a cartographic spatial representation of cultures fixed in place. As an analytic approach it speaks to the emotional attachment to natal soil, where nationalist romantic authors like Eduard Spranger distinguish the ‘milieu or environment as the surroundings into which any human individual is born and the *Heimat* which is the outcome of the process of growing together with the land’ (Boa and Palfreyman 2000). This spatiality maps emotional belonging onto discrete and bounded spatial containers, where space is always ‘a bounded medium of some kind which provides a sense of security and belonging’ (Boa and Palfreyman 2000). However, it also points to creating places through cultural action, rather than seeing space as a container existing , in Lefebvre’s words, ‘prior to whatever ends up filling it’ (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002).

the interaction of senses of self and space identified by Tom Conley’s (1996) study of cartographic rhetoric suggests the importance of representations of space in shaping our sense of spatiality. He

picks out moments such as the shift from European Cordiform map projections, where the world is wrapped around a heart shape, to island cosmographies which depict individualised locations as showing changing views 'from one of the microcosmic self as mirror of the macrocosmic world to one in which both the reader and the characters discover that every figure counts as an insular entity among thousands of others' (1996). The change in depicting space reflects shifts in society.

The rise of the map can be linked to alongside the emergence of nation states that defined themselves as territorially bounded and exclusive entities. Thus in the Ditchely portrait of Elizabeth I, c1592, by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, the monarch stands upon a map of southern England with globe earrings pendant from her ears, expressing the connection of territory and possession. The action of mapping is performative of the nation state in two ways. More than simply recording the territory, it first creates a territorialised imaginary that we now take for granted where the nation is defined by its extent, so modern atlases of medieval Europe anachronistically project a vision of territorially defined and discrete entities onto the past (Biggs 1999). Second, it offers a technology of governance. Thus Saxton's maps of England occur at a time when Burghley and Cecil were using maps to locate nobles, their strengths and loyalties while 'English tracts promoting New World colonies in the 1580's, there is less inscription of legal and ritual ceremonies that signify monarchical power, so much as an impulse to geographical surveillance that is ubiquitous in and perhaps even inseparable from these accounts' (Koch 1998). One can argue that the:

formation of the modern state depicted on the map was constituted in part through cartography - as a store of knowledge reflecting surveys that rulers sponsored to penetrate the ground over which they ruled; as a spatial form modeled on the map's linear boundary and homogeneous space; and, in the imagination, as political authority symbolized by territory and the earth's surface comprehended as a composite of states (Biggs 1999)

This conceptualisation of space, Foucault suggests, betrays a shift from a Medieval spatiality of

emplacement, grounding activity in locations that had specific meaning, to a more abstract sense of space as open, unending and varying only quantitatively by amount and position (Foucault 1986). Thus Foucault suggested that with ‘the constitution of an infinitely open space, the space of Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved. A thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement’ (Foucault 1986). The most famous example of the rise of this abstract space is the mapping of the west of the USA where, beyond route 277 in Ohio, land was marked out for potential homesteads, settlements and townships from great sweeping meridians charted across the land with such regularity that it was compared to graph paper (Linklater 2002). It drained all substantive content from place and replaced it with empty, exchangeable units of measurement. What this facilitated was the rapid commodification of land – with standard plot sizes and multiples thereof, identified by unique location in the grid. This version of space sees territory as divisible and multiplicable. The only change is quantity. As Lefebvre put it: ‘This is a space, therefore, that is *homogeneous yet at the same time broken up into fragments*’ (Lefebvre 1991).

While this account points to the performativity of spatial representations, in making the world ‘conquerable and containable for purposes of human occupancy and action’ (Harvey 1989) it does not go far enough in looking at the actual performances of mapping. As Edwards notes:

It is all too easy to think that we understand the power and the charm of the early modern map... we imagine we perceive the spirit of European artists, rulers, merchants and landlords for the first time in possession of their material environment: bursting the bubble of Medieval parochialism and stretching out to govern a space as limitless as the geometry which framed it. And if we do not celebrate this breaking free from place to space then we mourn it. (2005)

Cosgrove (1999) thus argues it is possible that concerns with maps as technologies of power dehistoricise them as artefacts. Looking upon them as symptoms of grand processes risks anachronistically projecting our modern (abstract) spatialities back onto the maps (Edwards 2005).

Seeing maps as entangled products embedded in a variety of writing practices gives a more sensitive view than just seeing them as ruses of power. Thus some maps were made more in the epideictic mode of celebrating achievements of rulers and potentates than signifying a 'mathematization of experience' (Edwards 2005) – one should not ignore the important role of the cartouches and other marginalia on maps that were hugely significant to contemporary readers (Conley 1996). Moreover, even the geometry needs to be set in its contemporary context where for instance, the use of formal geometry in New England town plans offered a 'mathematised morality of compassing and proportion' signifying attempts to balance, 'virtue, grace and providence and the chaotic energies of history and commerce' and thus were 'gestures in an anxious rhetoric of self-constraint' rather than 'expressions of a proto-Enlightenment culture of systematic domination' (Edwards 2005). Maps could relate to more than abstract spatial imaginaries. Alpers (1989) suggests that in the Dutch golden age maps were considered to be a kind of picture and pictures were considered descriptive. We might term these 'spatial vernaculars,' as Yonemoto does in her study of Tokugawa mapping, where she emphasises a need to 'understand maps as part of a larger mapping process, one that was imbricated in the growth of urban culture' (Yonemoto 2000). There Ryūsen's 1689 single sheet map combined the information of a gazetteer of nobles and clans with spatial information. It disavowed exact surveying as 'useless' since the 'the map's function is to help people find their way, in the city itself as well as in city life' (Yonemoto 2000). Ryūsen's map of Japan reworking of the legendary monk Gyōki's eighth century maps shows this vernacular evolved since the:

difference between Ryūsen's maps and the Gyōki-style model he references is the conspicuous absence in the Ryūsen's maps of a visual center. In Gyōki's maps there is a clear emphasis on the imperial capital, but in Ryūsen's maps, all roads do not lead to Kyoto or to Edo. Instead of giving central status to a single city, the map lacks a center. Instead, it guides the reader's attention to Japan's roads. The road network made movement to and from multiple "centers" possible, and in this way,

the map captures the growing interest in and necessity of travel in the late seventeenth century. (Yonemoto 2000)

Japanese sea charts of the period show coastal itineraries rather than portolan style coordinates across open, abstracted space. They encode the sea as dangerous and the land as civilised and the focus of prosperity, peace and threats (Yonemoto 1999). As Conley (1996) notes images, discourse and travels entwine in shared rhetorical constellations. Nor does a lack of maps equates to a lack of spatial awareness in medieval Europe. Thus while maps were limited we might look at the rise of ‘chorographies’, that is in Ptolemy’s schema detailed depictions of places, and rather more painterly views than abstract expansive geographies of connections. Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographie*, which went through thirty-six editions between 1544 and 1628, offered panoramic views of mostly German cities which built on longstanding traditions of quasi birds’ eye views of cities. The same spatial representation is evident in the six volumes of Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* where for instance the map of London has a hill somehow inserted the south of Southwark to offer a convenient surrogate vantage point for the viewer who is thus positioned alongside several denizens of noble degree and dress who look out upon a vista of London stretching from Westminster to the Tower (Koch 1998). The contrivance is typical not so much of a will to power as the expression of a belief in the unity of urban life and space, and thus a desire to unify it in representation even if no such view was afforded the actual observer (Nuti 1999).

The range of spatial representations reflect social values not a teleological narrative of ever improving accuracy. Thus in a study of fourteenth and fifteenth century Marseille Smail (2000) outlines competing locational systems in the city. Notaries led the use of street and house locational references, referring for instance to ‘Moneychangers street’ (*carrerria Cambiorum*), but artisanal accounts imagined the city as neighbourhoods referring to the area of moneychangers (*Cambio*), meanwhile propertied classes referred to territorial blocks like ‘islands’ (*insula Cambiorum*). In these cases ‘the lexical term remains the same. It is the structure of space – imagined as a street, as a

vicinity or as an island – that shifts.’ (Smail 2000). The differences reflect spatial practices not relative accuracy, so for instance for land owners streets became just a buffer between islands of owned territory, while the neighbourhood imaginary of artisans reflected the organization of space around confraternities.

Creating Space: Scales of life, spatial relations of places

The preceding discussion suggests some spatial representations and scales have become hegemonic at particular moments in either or both the real world and academic studies. We might distinguish spatial visions that see the world as composed of processes acting at different spatial scales and those which see places not as differently sized containers but composed of entangled spatial relations. So in this section I want to try to show how these two perspectives offer insights into thinking through premodern life. Certainly the national scale is often inappropriate, from Braudel (1995) alerted us to other scales and issues be that the grand regional scale of the Mediterranean or the functioning of world cities in long distance trade. Thus in ‘the mercantile era, when oceans connected centers of coastal settlement into networks of seaborne commerce, diaspora, and empire, the maritime city often maintained a tenuous relationship with the landed empire of its hinterland’ (Cartier 1999). Melaka served as the major entrepôt between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, and in James Scott's view, “Melaka in 1500 before the Portuguese conquest was with its polyglot, trading population probably more diverse, open and cosmopolitan than its contemporary trading port, Venice” ((1997, 7) in Cartier 1999). Burke argues that of Venice we should see it as an information centre for trade and commerce between east and west – an open porous city composed of flows moving through it (Burke 2000). Indeed, Cosgrove’s (1982) analysis of Barbari’s map of Venice suggests how the subject of the map ‘is the commonwealth of Venice rather than the physical city’ using a visual metaphor to instantiate the Venetian state (Schulz 1978). Thus Venice’s spatial representation as bounded city fosters the myth of the urban republic (Cosgrove

1982) focusing upon the scale of the city rather than the relations that extend the city far beyond its physical edges.

That imaginary of self-contained urban space has figured large in urban histories from Ennen and Pirenne's classic studies onwards. So often we find the depiction as follows

The medieval city was a densely built environment, a "compact silhouette," with encircling walls and imposing towers that protected it from the surrounding landscape. The walls served not only defensive purposes, however; they also demarcated a special realm or sphere of urban rights. Those "urban rights," Ennen goes on to explain, were predicated on a widespread system of civic equality that was fundamentally in opposition to the feudal system that prevailed outside city walls, and on a constitution that allowed citizens to participate in their own government, even granting them supreme political autonomy. (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002)

In other words it is a spatially defined entity where rights and freedoms are enjoyed by virtue of residence. Such a scalar imaginary reflects the self-ideology and spatial practices of cities where as 'early as the thirteenth century, the citizenry of these towns regularly expressed their claims for urban privileges — or "liberties," as they typically called them — in spatial terms, describing their republics as coherent, discrete, sociopolitical spaces, enclaves carved out of an alien geographical, social, and political terrain' (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002). For instance Attreed's study reveals the intimate and recursive connection of legal claims and spatial entities.

Every town possessed, and developed within, concrete, geographical space, whether it was physically demarcated by walls and gates or only judicially defined by charters and grants. But those spaces could also be shared and challenged by other corporate bodies, especially that of the Church. The resultant clash of claims engendered conditions under which the identities of both bodies underwent change

and definition.... legal rights, exercised within the abstract juridical space that defined the unique state of the town, required real geographical space for their fullest and most secure expression. The pursuit of that physical space forced urban officials to clarify their needs, motives, and ideals in ways conducive to self-definition (Attreed 2002)

Rather than urban islands of freedom in a feudal sea, cities were shot through with complicating jurisdictions and their boundaries, walls or not, were rather porous. Thus in Exeter, the extramural liberty of Dean and Chapter was a compact holding where civic rights to collect tallages and arrest offenders were resisted from the mid-thirteenth century until an Act of Parliament in 1436. Its compact spatial form strengthened both the claim of the church and aided a compromise over control. The Bishop's fee of Stephen was more problematic being dispersed around the city which 'struck city authorities as deeply threatening to their supremacy within the delimited urban space; [... since m]iscreants from the city's liberty could escape into the episcopal liberty, sometimes simply by crossing a street' (Attreed 2002).

The depiction of urban liberties has an illustrious and controversial career. Thus a spate of revisionist studies have suggested that 'cities were simply bigger, more powerful conglomerations of people drawn from — and bound to — a more diffuse "feudal" culture' (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002). This debate is refracted through a North South divide where urban cultures, and certainly urban historiography North and South of the Alps are markedly different. The Italian Renaissance being seen as an urban story where cities overcame the medieval 'hodgepodge of spatially conceived loyalties governed by neighborhoods, clans, families, and local religious practice' (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002). My aim is not to work through these arguments but to point to way cities' spatial construction refracts and sustains practices, and provides constraints and resources. For instance, ritual performances, 'far from being independent of space, acquire their power precisely through occupying particular spaces' (Arnade, Howell, and Simons 2002). Thus if

we take the example of Siena Nevola unpacks its fifteenth century ritual geographies where the architectural space of the city was functioning on many levels, symbolic to everyday, overwritten by temporary routes and processions, which acted to reinscribe significance on the built fabric and modulate the meanings of fixed points (Jackson and Nevola 2006). One can see the competing scales of governance and spatial practice on the occasion of the Imperial visit in 1452 where fears about hosting the overlord prompted a festival before the visit using ‘a ritual route which claimed and declared possession of the city’s public spaces’ celebrating the *popolo* regime and self government (Nevola 2003). In addition the city issued an invitation and safe conduct passage, none too subtly turning the Emperor who claimed to rule over them into the guest of the free city. The ritual of greeting was staged outside the northern gate of the city, the Porta Camollia in a relatively large open field, that enabled the theatrical displays surrounding the official ceremonial of meeting between the city’s guests and the civic representatives, an event which took place in front of a large crowd of onlooking citizens, as well as positioning the ritual in a neutral liminal zone (Nevola 2003). The gates of the city were symbolically charged spaces marking ‘a legal and military boundary between the *civitas* and the *contado*,’ but also forming ‘a symbolic threshold for citizenship, authority and a host of other values associated with membership of the urban community’ (Jackson and Nevola 2006). The ritual inscription of gates has often formed a key moment of spatially instituting power and symbolic control (Sanger and Warmoes 2003). Within the city spaces are also symbolically charged so that when, for instance, Siena hosted a papal visit, the papal court was installed around significant palaces lining the routes between the Cathedral housing the Pope and major religious institutions while unsightly butchers and blacksmiths were removed from visible streets (Nevola 2006).

A structuralist reading of a city like Venice’s spaces would suggest that ‘the central node of Venice expressed a complex symbolic structure, understandable in terms of the humanist ideas shared by the Venetian patriciate and in terms of the Venetian myth’ (Cosgrove 1982). That is looking at the

Piazza San Marco one can see axes of sacred (the basilica) and secular (the flanking arcades of the Procuratie), monarchical (the Doge's Palace), the aristocratic and republican, as well as oppositions of sea and land. This constellation of symbolic sites was itself cast within a wider triangular pattern of locations surrounding the Doge's Palace and the Basilica that contrasted San Marco as the site of order and ritual, with the Arsenal as a place of technology and the Rialto, that was dominated by a commercial logic (Cosgrove 1982). We can see this symbolic space underpins maps such as that of Jacopo de Barbari, which centres on San Marco and whose visual distortion increases the further one looks from there. It depicts cosmological significance and order as much as being a realistic representation (Cosgrove 1982).

There are equally significant symbolic framings in cities of the Muslim world. Thus the Ayyudib citadel of Aleppo is dominated by a citadel setting its foreign rulers apart from the ruled, and enclosing the palace within. Under its walls, the *dar al'adl* court of justice was linked to the palace by a hidden passage, allowing rapid everyday access and egress with recourse the massively ornamented ceremonial gates of the citadel that form the route for processions, while the mosque on the highest point is visible from whole city both unifying and surveying it (Tabbaa 1993). There is a complex literature on 'Islamic urbanism' that has often read urban form out of Islamic faith in problematic ways given the massive variation as various rulers at various times have built and used cities differently. Indeed even one of the most simple elements of the alignment of mosques upon Mecca, is more variable than might be imagined with for instance, *qibla* alignment in Morocco, varying as much as 45 degrees within one city (Bonine 1990). Accounts have long pointed to putatively shared features of a citadel permanent market, religious schools, city walls, and organization of residences by wards based on ethnicity or trades, with quarters arranged in concentric zones by social status, progressing from higher levels at the centre, for instance as recounted by Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century:

“Near the mosque as a religious center we will find the suppliers of the sanctuary, the suq of the candle merchants, the dealers in incense and other perfumes. Near the mosque as an intellectual center we will find also the suq of the booksellers, the suq of the bookbinders, and, as its neighbor, the suq of the leather merchants and the makers of slippers; Adjoining this group of markets we enter the halls of the dealers in textiles, the qaisariyya.... Next to the textile trade the carpenters, locksmiths, and the producers of copper utensils will be located; and somewhat farther from the center, the smiths; Approaching to the gates ... one will find ... the makers of saddles and those of pack saddlers.... Then the vendors of victuals brought in from the country who sometimes will form a market outside the gates, together with the basket makers, the sellers of spun wool and the like.” (Bonine 1977)

This structure has become the underpinning of many broadly derogatory accounts that line this up and compare it with the idealised European urban spaces mentioned earlier. So Planhol would look at the quarters as disrupting the unified urban ideal often depicted in Renaissance accounts, as lacking specifically urban liberties and polities, (Bonine 1977). The Orient becomes negatively defined as lacking European spaces.

Lived space and spaces of sociality

These urban symbolic systems, partly conventional and partly derived from formal institutions, were not uniformly understood or indeed accepted. Thus just as the juridical space of the city might be porous and fragmented so too was its symbolic registry where competing and conflicting codings clashed from church, commercial and civic liturgies and sign systems of the aristocracy. The symbolic world of the city was not then about location in abstract space but a medieval sense of locus as social place, not disembodied abstract space (Camille 2000). This is not just at the grand level of the formal signs of statecraft but at the micro-level associating people, places and trades.

Thus ‘in thinking about the place that was the medieval city we have to enlarge our conception of public space to include this shared system of signs’ where in say rue Saint Antoine, new apprentices were forced to kiss the ‘Truie qui file’ [The Spinning Sow] sign that designated the street, with their elders carefully smashing their noses into it till nightfall heralded dancing and revelry through the neighbourhood (Camille 2000). The presence of the sign system was physical as well as visual, secular as well as sacred, personal and public. In navigating the medieval city the presence and intrusion of signs is well documented with London for instance banning signs in 1375 (and again in 1419) that stretched more than seven feet into the highway:

‘the old sculptural signs, jutting out as they did onto the street-space itself, became one with the rubbed-up-against, quotidian chaos of the body politic. As well as this important material aspect, the way such signs create a kind of mental map of modes of power is also important. The medieval imaginary was teeming with signs that differentiated one mini-element, that is one house, from another’. (Camille 2000)

It is only in 1805 that Paris compelled the numbering of streets to replace the more than three thousand pictorial signs of the eighteenth century. This then is perhaps the rise of an abstract space in the heart of the city (de Certeau 1984). Alongside this was a sonoric landscape (Leppert 1993) where local neighbourhoods were distinguishable by bells as acoustic communities. The cathedral or central bells, or the call of the grand mosque, might offer the unity of city, and there was a hierarchy in control of official sound. But equally vociferous, and part of neighbourhood identity, were forms of public insult and rough music forming a layered semiotic system (Garrioch 2003).

The Venetian symbolic landscape was animated and sustained by numerous rituals such as the Doge’s annual marriage to the Sea, or the Ascension day processions in the Piazza. These linked the social geographies and symbolic geographies of cities (Romano 1989). So the symbolic geography creates sites of heightened charge and significance for different people and occasions. For example, the gendering of social and spatial worlds is illustrated in Venetian legal judgements. Medieval

legal space involved both the managing the moral distance of good and bad (Flint 2000), and also the use of locations whose symbolic meaning addressed the crime or the victim. Punishment might involve the exclusion of offenders from both direct and indirect access to political power by excluding them physically from the places around San Marco where that power was exercised, alternately a cheating Merchant would be denounced in the Rialto, and when the courts sought to rescue a defamed woman's honour, it had the slanderer taken and castigated during Mass in her own and neighbouring Parish churches (Romano 1989). This sketches out a map of communities and audiences at least in the eyes of official Venice. A female geography of parish, neighbourhood and home that was enforced by the double veiling of women beyond those confines –themselves covered and traveling on covered gondolas. In Ferrara frescoes depict a similar pattern with respectable women viewing public events from, and being viewed at, balconies with unrespectable women in the street (Ghirardo 2000). This regulation and marking of space might be seen in the conduct of gossip, with the urban authorities concerned over the movement of the word on the street. The symbolic geography of Venice located public speech in San Marco, the information of commerce in the Rialto and confined feminised gossip to the neighbourhoods (Horodowich 2005). But in practice this division is less clear, since male gossip was a crucial, if sometimes destabilizing, part of politics, especially around the broglio and elections – to the extent that the state regulated speech at these times in key locations. As befits a commercial city the flow of information was central to urban life. Thus on 23 June 1509, the Venetian diarist Girolamo Priuli commented:

‘People were gossiping and talking and spreading so many lies without any foundation in the Piazza San Marco and under the loggie of the Procuratie and at the Rialto and in the churches and barbershops that one could not figure out what was true... beyond being embarrassing, was damaging, since whatever was spoken and said in the *piazze* was then described outside the city, since there were many diverse explorers and listeners’ (Horodowich 2005)

The location of gossip, its control and connection to external flows seem crucial here. One might contrast it to the kind of geographies of the printed word traced by Roger Chartier (1987). The gendered fears over gossip often parallel the open female mouth to the open door and the exposed body as threats to familial honour and become the sites of huge psycho-social investment. Thus Henri de Mondeville in fourteenth century France likened the body to 'the house of the soul, which like any house can only be maintained as such by constant surveillance of its openings. The woman's body is seen as an inadequate enclosure because its boundaries are convoluted... turned inside out' (Camille 2000). The effect, according to Stallybrass, is that 'the surveillance of women concentrated upon three specific areas: the mouth, chastity and the threshold of the house' (Camille 2000). These might be symbolically collapsed onto each other in the yellow veil marking out the Venetian prostitute and the infamy bestowed upon the Rialto for women or indeed the semi-official mapping of a policed female sexuality in the 'designation of the insula Rivoalti as the center of prostitution and the bestowal of place names on at least two brothels (the Castelletto and the Carampane), indicating the extent to which prostitution also became part of the city's symbolic geography. The presumption might be that women in known areas were prostitutes and prostitution was often policed by being spatially confined and controlled – trying to spatially separate reputable and disreputable women (Ghirardo 2000). On the other side, the convent was a distinctive female place where virginity conjoined with public honor (Romano 1989). In many Italian cities both bordellos and convents were both located at the margins of cities.

Rather than simply accepting a binary notion of public and private, male and female space we might note that:

female networks lay at the heart of local communities in early modern Venice... At first glance this conforms to assumptions about male public and female private space... Yet where neighbourhood has played an important role within the political structures of cities, any such gender division seems to contradict the stereotype.

Furthermore, .. “local” does not necessarily mean “private,” nor does nonlocal equate to “public”: in Venice many women were firmly anchored in their neighborhoods, but moved around the city. (Garrioch and Peel 2006)

We must then be careful of projecting an anachronistic notion of private or public space.

Early modern European neighbourhoods were generally more socially diverse than modern ones and defined by structures of political allegiance rather than wealth. But equally the pattern is massively varied where for instance Parisian parishes of twelve thousand had a weaker hold on popular imaginations and affiliations than Milanese ones of two thousand. In Milan:

neighborhood-based religious associations were everywhere. The most important were the eighty-six or so *Companie della Croce*. These centered on crosses erected in intersections or squares where the male members were required to congregate each evening for prayers’.. and they were fundamental in ‘shaping people’s awareness of space. The crosses in particular were landmarks, visually striking and strategically located. The images and altars were maintained by the local people whose protection they assured, and they promoted a very strong sense of territory. (Garrioch 2001)

Here then we have a sense of space as enabling dense associations that sustained civic and political life. The mutual entanglement of space, practice and society is illustrated by the rise of Baroque court festival culture – keyed to the creation of specific spaces through artificial light, offering a new rhythm and pattern of life where ‘Baroque festival culture, [tied] new secular spaces with innovative divisions of daily time. The great spaces built for balls and celebrations at European courts in the seventeenth century (such as the Whitehall Banqueting House in London, the *Herkules-Saal* or the *Kaiser-Saal* at the Munich residence, or the Dresdner *Zwinger*) made possible better-lit evening gatherings’ and shifted key social events from the street to the court, and from day

to night (Koslofsky 2002). Here the colonisation and regulation of the night offers another story of the emergence of specific practices in the space-times of the city.

Spaces of Historiography:

The different ways I have tried to go through space – as a way of representing the world, as relational and scalar spaces and as the site of lived practice – reflect a number of tensions and contrasts both in how space is used and how space has been analysed. Through the discussion of mapping as historical practice and as an analytic imaginary, and through the articulation of the urban scale of government in practice – as an imaginary and myth actively deployed by people at the time, as well as an analytic construct imposed on practices that exceed and destabilise such scalar accounts -- I suggested differing scales frame activities and that spaces are produced and not given. Differing scales framing practices may also conflict and compete with each other. One might draw a parallel with time where scales of spatial activity are no more natural than senses of periods, generations and epochs – but just as effective in framing life. Meanwhile temporal narratives maybe parallel the sense of spatial relations, where historical narrative leaps unevenly over chronology, so spatial relations twist and play with locational proximities and distances. My aim then has been to suggest that we always have socially constructed spaces – as exemplified when cadastral patterns, and patterns of allegiance and lineage, along with differentiated connectivities and transport refract juridical patterns of influence and control (carpenter [this volume](#)).

Space is not a given dimension for action, but rather is produced through action. As Michel Foucault put it pithily enough:

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in

itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We ... live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (Foucault 1986)

He draws in the sense of groundedness that space gives to accounts – the connection to the lived world – that is undoubtedly one of its attractions. Likewise his insistence that we live in a world of relations that produce heterogeneous sites raises issues about the historical transformation of senses of space and of dominant categories of space. Thus the dominant account of modernising space might be seen as the triumph of an optical space, of an abstract cartographic mode of understanding space, emerging against medieval accounts. A scopic spatiality where

all that is is visible; ... there is nothing hidden, occult, or mysterious. All things exist insofar as their properties are perceptible and an account can be made of them; as such, all things are inert. This is a nonmythical form of realized eschatology: the truth of what is is fully present and presenced. The truth and identity of the material order declares itself by the force of its own existence'. [As Lefebvre tells us] "The illusion of transparency goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places". (Ward 2001)

This is Lefebvre continues the 'modernist trio, triad or trinity [of] readability-visibility-intelligibility.' What de Certeau characterised as a slow revolution draining of mystery from the world (de Certeau 1992). For a spatial historiography, then the issue is of thinking through spaces that fit the times. But also always and inevitably as historical narrative relates the past to our time, relate the voices of the past through the writing of the present, so too it must relate our spaces to past spaces, the space of the archive to that of the world depicted. A spatial view that does not seek to put everything in its place and find a place for everything, but also uses the connections and twistings of spatial relations to complicate and enrich accounts.

References

- Alpers, S. 1989. *The art of describing : Dutch art in the seventeenth century*. London: Penguin.
- Archer, K. 1993. Regions as Social Organisms: The Lamarckian Characteristics of Vidal de la Blache's Regional Geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83 (3):498-514.
- Arnade, P., M. Howell, and W. Simons. 2002. Fertile Spaces: The Productivity of Urban Space in Northern Europe. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* xxxii (4):515-548.
- Attreed, L. 2002. Urban Identity in Medieval English Towns. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* xxxii (4):571-592.
- Biggs, M. 1999. Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41:374-405.
- Boa, E., and R. Palfreyman. 2000. *Heimat: A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990*, *Oxford Studies in Modern European Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bonine, M. E. 1977. From Uruk to Casablanca: Perspectives on the Urban Experience of the Middle East. *Journal of Urban History* ; ; 3 (2):141-80.
- . 1990. The Sacred Direction and City Structure: A Preliminary Analysis of the Islamic cities of Morocco. In *Muqarnas VII: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. O. Grabar, 50-72. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Braudel, F. 1995. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II*. [2nd rev. ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burke, P. 2000. Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication. In *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, eds. J. Martin and D. Romano. Baltimore.
- Camille, M. 2000. Signs of the City: Place, Power and Public Fantasy in Medieval Paris. In *Medieval Practices of Space*, eds. B. Hanawalt and M. Kobialka, 1-36. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Cartier, C. 1999. Cosmopolitics and the Maritime World City. *Geographical Review* 89 (2):278-289.
- Chartier, R. 1987. *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*. NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Conley, T. 1996. *The Self-Made Map: cartographic writing in early modern France*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cosgrove, D. 1982. The Myth and the Stones of Venice - an Historical Geography of a Symbolic Landscape. *Journal of Historical Geography* 8 (2):145-169.
- . 1999. Mapping Meaning. In *Mappings*, ed. D. Cosgrove, 1-23. London: Reaktion.
- Crang, M. 2005. Time: Space. In *Spaces of Geographical Thought*, eds. R. Johnson and P. Cloke, 199-217 Sage.
- de Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Berkeley, CA: California University Press. Original edition, L'Arts de faire, Editions Minuit.
- . 1992. *The Mystic Fable: the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*. Translated by M. Smith. Vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edwards, J. 2005. Study, Marketplace and Labyrinth: Geometry as Rhetoric. *New Formations* 57 (Winter):126-44.

- Elden, S. 2001. *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History*. London: Continuum.
- Flint, V. I. 2000. Space and Discipline in Early Medieval Europe. In *Medieval Practices of Space*, eds. B. Hanawalt and M. Kobialka, 149-66. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1986. Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics* 16 (1):22-27.
- Garrioch, D. 2001. Sacred Neighborhoods and Secular Neighborhoods: Milan and Paris in the Eighteenth Century. *Journal of Urban History* 27 (405-19).
- . 2003. Sounds of the city: the soundscape of early modern European towns. *Urban History* 30 (1):5-25.
- Garrioch, D., and M. Peel. 2006. The Social History of Urban Neighborhoods. *Journal of Urban History* 32:663-76.
- Ghirardo, D. 2000. Women and Space in a Renaissance Italian City. In *Intersections : Architectural Histories and Critical Theories*, eds. I. Borden and J. Rendell, 170 -98. London: Routledge.
- Harvey, D. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Horodowich, E. 2005. The gossiping tongue: oral networks, public life and political culture in early modern Venice. *Renaissance Studies* 19 (1):22-45.
- Jackson, P., and F. Nevola. 2006. Beyond the Palio: urbanism and ritual in Renaissance Siena. *Renaissance Studies* 20 (2):137-46.
- Koch, M. 1998. Ruling the World: The Cartographic Gaze in Elizabethan Accounts of the New World. *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4, 2 (3):11 #1-39.
- Koslofsky, C. 2002. Court Culture and Street Lighting in Seventeenth-Century Europe. *Journal of Urban History* ; ; 28:743-68.
- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwells.
- Leppert, R. 1993. *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation and the History of the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Linklater, A. 2002. *Measuring America: How the United States was Shaped by the Greatest Land Sale in History*. London: Harper Collins.
- Nevola, F. 2003. 'Lieto e trionfante per la città': experiencing a mid-fifteenth-century imperial triumph along Siena's Strada Romana. *Renaissance Studies* 17 (4):581-606.
- . 2006. Ritual geography: housing the papal court of Pius II Piccolomini in Siena (1459–60). *Renaissance Studies* 20 (2):201-24.
- Nuti, L. 1999. Mapping Places: Chorography and Vision in the Renaissance. In *Mappings*, ed. D. Cosgrove, 90-108. London: Reaktion.
- Olwig, K. 1993. Sexual Cosmology: nation and landscape at the conceptual interstices of nature and culture; or, what does landscape really mean. In *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. B. Bender, 307-43. Oxford: Berg.
- Romano, D. 1989. Gender and the Urban Geography of Renaissance Venice. *Journal of Social History* 23 (2):339-353.
- Sanger, V., and I. Warmoes. 2003. The City Gates of Louis XIV. *Journal of Urban History* 30 (1):50-69.
- Schulz, J. 1978. Jacopo de' Barbari's View of Venice: Map Making, City Views, and Moralized Geography before the Year 1500. *The Art Bulletin* 60 (3):425-474.
- Smail, D. L. 2000. The Linguistic Cartography of Property and Power in Late Medieval Marseille. In *Medieval Practices of Space*, eds. B. Hanawalt and M. Kobialka, 37-63. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Tabbaa, Y. 1993. Circles of Power: Palace, Citadel, and City in Ayyubid Aleppo. *Ars Orientalis* 23:181-200.
- Vidal de la Blache, P. 1941 *La personnalité géographique de la France*. London The University press.
- Ward, G. 2001. Michel de Certeau's "Spiritual Spaces". *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100 (2):501-17.
- Wigley, M. 1993. *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Yonemoto, M. 1999. Maps and metaphors of the "small eastern sea" in Tokugawa Japan (1603-1868). *Geographical Review* 89 (2):169-187.
- . 2000. The "spatial vernacular" in Tokugawa maps. *Journal of Asian Studies* 59 (3):647-666.